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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HONG KONG 001654

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP/CM

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/01/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [HK](#)

SUBJECT: DEMOCRATIC PARTY'S LEGCO ELECTION STRATEGY: METHOD
TO THEIR MADNESS

REF: (A) HONG KONG 1272 (B) HONG KONG 1599

Classified By: Consul General Joseph R. Donovan for reasons 1.4 (b) and
(d)

11. (C) Summary and comment: The Democratic Party's (DPHK) decision to run multiple slates in the same geographic constituencies (GC) in the September 7 Legislative Council (Legco) elections appears less self-destructive when explained by either the appeal of a candidate to a particular GC locale or the desire to headline a rising star. DPHK strategist (and former Legco member) Professor Law Chi-kwong identified four young leaders who have committed to support the DPHK whether they win seats in the current race or not (and most will not, by our count), who in turn are receiving greater party support as slate headliners than they would as second-tier candidates running with incumbents. Law regrets the loss of Anson Chan as the potential unifying leader of the democratic bloc and most suitable candidate to replace DPHK founder Martin Lee as the ambassador of the democratic camp to the international community. End summary and comment.

DPHK Electoral Strategy and the "DP4"

12. (C) We met with HKU Professor and DPHK strategist C.K. Law recently to get a better feel for the DPHK's intentions in running so many GC electoral slates in the current Legco elections. This move has been described by many as the clearest indicator of the breakdown in pan-democratic electoral coordination, and as such has provoked at least some criticism from their fellow pro-democracy Civic Party (ref A). Further, many within the DPHK wonder whether enough has been done to prepare for the coming generational shift. Law admits to an element of giving the DPHK's second-tier members their long-withheld "shot" at electoral politics. He noted, however, that politics is not about seniority or climbing a career ladder. Pointing to U.S. presidential candidate Barack Obama, he noted that real political leaders are ready to grab their chance when they see it, jumping the queue if necessary.

13. (C) He named four candidates (nicknamed the DP4) whom are receiving particular support from the party. They are:

-- Kam Nai-wai, leading the DPHK's sole Hong Kong Island Ticket (over party veteran and Legco incumbent Yeung Sum);

-- Wu Chi-wai, a slate of one in Kowloon East, where the DPHK main slate is led by incumbent Fred Li;

-- Wong Sing-chi, heading a slate of two in New Territories East, where the DPHK is also running a seven-person slate headed by incumbent Andrew Cheng; and

-- Cheung Yin-tung, first on a two-man slate, the DPHK's third in New Territories West. The other two are headed by

incumbents Lee Wing-tat and Albert Ho, respectively.

Kam is widely tipped to take the Hong Kong Island DPHK seat, essentially the seat left open by Martin Lee's retirement. The slate is not expected to win enough votes to re-elect Yeung Sum. Wong Sing-chi is seen as a potential pan-democratic spoiler in New Territories East, who could win at the expense of votes for the Frontier's Emily Lau and the League of Social Democrats' Leung Kwok-hung (aka Long Hair).

14. (C) Law explained that the DP4 had to commit to remain active on Legco issues whether they win or lose, meaning that they would attend meetings with the DPHK Legco caucus and support the party's Legco agenda. In return, Law said, they were receiving a larger share of the party's support in their campaigns than the other secondary players filling out the DPHK's slates. Indeed, their positions at the top of their respective slates represent their best chance of election, since they will have first shot at whatever votes are collected by the slate, rather than hoping enough votes remain after an incumbent is reelected. (Note: A winning Legco slate usually elects one candidate, a second is possible only with truly massive support, and a third is almost a mathematical impossibility. See ref B for the mechanics of the election.) There is an element of Darwinism as well, as each of the four will sink or swim on the strength of his own campaign.

The King is Dead, Long Live the Queen?

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15. (C) Law recalled that the original United Democrats represented the union of a diverse body of activists, who achieved their shared first-hurdle goal just by getting into Legco. Once they became part of the political process, however, unity became harder to maintain. Law believes (as does commentator Allen Lee; ref A) that retiring Legco member and former Chief Secretary for Administration Anson Chan could have both served as a leader able to unify the DPHK and the Civic Party (CP) and replaced retiring DPHK Legco Member Martin Lee as the new ambassador for the pan-democrats to the international community. With Chan effectively withdrawing from party politics (she served as an independent but was allied with the democrats), Law sees CP leader Audrey Eu as next most capable of leading the democrats. That said, he is not sure Eu is committed enough to do so. Law is not the only observer to suggest to us that Eu's placing herself number 2 on the CP's Hong Kong Island GC slate reflects in some part her reluctance to continue serving in Legco. (Note: Eu herself told us recently she expects Lee will remain active as the democrats' ambassador, a role he relishes. End note.)

DONOVAN